

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

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O 061237Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8444

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T AMMAN 3552

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR JO US SA IR

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE-TALK WITH RIFAI

REF: (A) AMMAN 3512 (B) AMMAN 3513, (C) STATE 166458

SUMMARY: I SAW RIFAI JULY 6 ON HIS RETURN FROM VISIT TO TEHRAN AND WITH KING TO JIDDA. RIFAI WAS VERY OPTIMISTIC SAYING THEY HAD HAD AN EXCELLENT VISIT AND RECEPTION IN JIDDA, SAUDIS APPEARED VERY SYMPATHETIC TO PROVIDING 500 MILLION PLUS FOR HAWK DEAL, SAUDI ALSO SEEMED MORE SUPPORTIVE OF SYRIA THAN IN THE PAST AND ARE STILL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN RAPPROCHEMENT. END SUMMARY

1. I TOLD RIFAI I HAD COME TO GET A READ OUT FROM HIM ON HIS TRIPS AND ALSO TO FILL IN ANY GAPS HE MIGHT HAVE HAD IN HIS OWN MIND ON THE INSTRUCTIONS I WENT OVER WITH THE KING JULY 4 PRIOR TO KINGS DEPARTURE FOR SAUDI ARABIA.

2. RIFAI SAID HIS TRIP HAD BEEN EXCELLENT. RECEPTION WAS IN GOOD INTEHRAN AND SHAH ASSURED RIFAI THAT KING KHALID AGREED TO MAKE \$500 MILLION AVAIL A FOR ANY

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WESTERN SYSTEM NOT ANGLO AMERICAN PROPOSAL ALONE.

SHAH HAD SUGGESTED THE NUMBER BECAUSE SOMEONE HAD TOLD HIM IT WAS THE RIGHT FIGURE. RIFAI ALSO ADDED THAT SHAH HAS AGREED TO FUND JORDAN ARMOR REBUILD FACILITY FOR DIESELIZING AND UPGUNNING OF KINGS TANKS.

3. RIFAI SAID THA HE ARRIVED IN JIDDA 15 MINUTES BEFORE KING. HE WAS MET BY PRINCE FAHBJ WHO TOLD RIFAI THAT "SITUATION LOOKS VERY GOOD AND YO WIILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED BY THIS VISIT".

4. RIFAI SAID KING TOLD SAUDIS FULLY AND COMPLETELY ABOUT SOVIET OFFER AND HANDED THEM A COPY OF SOVIET PROVIDED DOCUMENTS OUTLINDING THE OFFER IN COMPLETE DETAIL. KING HAD EXPLAINED ALSO THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY US JUST BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE THAT WITH THE DROPPING OF A DEPOT AND SOME OTHER ITEMS PRICE COULD BE REDUCED TO \$510-543 MILLION. US WOULD MAINTAIN DELIVERY SCHEDULE EXCEPT FOR SLIPPAGE DUE TO FUNDING PROBLEM. SAUDIS HAD MADE GENERAL STATEMENT THAT THEY WERE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BEING PREPARED TO PROVIDE THE FUNDING AND THAT WHILE AN OFFICIAL DECISION WOULD REQUIRE FURTHER CONSULTATION AMONG THEM, JORDAN WOULD BE INFORMED BY WEDNESDAY JULY 7 OF SAUDI FINAL DECISION. RIFAI SAID THAT FAHD TOLD HIM PRIVATELY LATER THAN SAUDI SUPPORT WAS ASSURED AND THAT CONSULTATION WAS ONLY FORMALITY.

5. RIFAI SAID HE BELIEVES WINCE THE SUADIS KNOW THAT JORDANIANS KNOW OF PROMISE OF SHAH FOR \$500 MILLION, SAUDIS THEMSELVES WILL VOLUNTEER TO PICK UP ANY SMALL REMAINING DIFFERENCES IN PRICE. RIFAI SAID HOWEVER THAT IF SAUDIS ARE NOT ABLE TO HE WAS SURE HE COULD FIND MINDY FROM SOME PLACE. RIFAI SAID ATMOSPHERE OF VISIT WAS EXCELLENT, BETTER THAN ANY OTHER HE HAD EXPERIENCED IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THAT SIDE CONVERSTIONS WITH VARIOUS SAUDI SENIOR OFFICIALS TENDED TO CONFIRM THIS ATMOSPHERE CONTRARY TO SITUATION PREVALENT IN PAST VISITS.

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6. ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS, RIFAI SAID THAT SAUDIS WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO SUPPORT ASAD AS BES AND POSSIBLY ONLY REAL LEADER IN SYRAIA. THEY WERE MUCH MORE FORTH COMING THAN JORDANIANS EXPCTED ALTHOUGH RIFAI ALLOWED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM ME THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN PART OF SAUDI POLITENESS AND DIPLOMACY RATHER THAN REAL FEELINGS.

7.ON EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN RAPPROCHEMENT, SUADIS INDICATED THEIR STRONG CONCERN THAT PROGRESS CONTINUE. THEIR PRESENT IDEA IS THAT SOMETIME NEAR THE END OF SEPTEMBER AFTER RAMADAN THE DAUDIS MIGHT INVITE ASAD AND SADAT TOGETHER TO COME TO SAUDI ARABIA "TO REVIEW A MILITARY PARADE NOT NECESSARILY TO TALK".

8. RIFAI SAID THAT THE BEATING HE HAD TAKEN PERSONALLY FROM KHALID DURING HIS LAST TRIP TO SAUDI ARABIA HAD QUITE POSSIBLY HELPED TO SETTLE THE ATMOSPHERE ALONG WITH WHAT HE INDICATED WAS SAUDI CONCERN ABOUT THE REAL POSSIBILITY OF SOVIET BIROADS INTO JORDAN. RIFAI SAID JORDANIANS HAD ASKED MANY TIMES IF SAUDIS HAD ANY PROBLEMS OR ISSUES TO DISCUSS OR RAISE WITH THEM. ON EACH OCCASION SAUDIS DEMURRED.

9'. SHAH TOLD RIFAI THAT HE HAD INFORMED SAUDIS THAT THEY COULD COUNT THEMSELVES VERY LUCKY THAT HUSSEIN HAD NOT BEEN OFFERED A FREE GIFT OF AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT BY THE SOVIETS.

10. RIFAI SAID KING WAS VERY ATTRACTED BY SOVIET OFFER AND THE AND BIN SHAKER HAD EXPENDED SOME EFFORT TO CONVINCE KING THAT THE ONLY REAL ALTERNATIVE FOR FUNDING AS WELL AS MANY OTHER REASONS WAS US OFFER. (COMMENT: I THINK WE MUST OBVIOUSLY ACCEPT RIFAI'S SELF SERVING REMARKS ON THIS POINT WITH SOME RESERVE. END COMMENT)

11 COMMENT: BY WAY OF GENERAL REACTIONS OUR FEELINGS HERE IS IT IS TOO EARLY TO KNOW WHETHER THIS IS REALLY THE END OF THE FINANCING PROBLEM OR NOT. WE HAVE BEEN NEARLY TO THIS STEP SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE ONLY TO HAVE
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IT FALL THROUGH. I SUSPECT WE WILL KNOW WITHIN THE WEEK WHAT THE SAUDIS ARE PREPARED TO DO. FAHD INSISTED TO RIFAI THAT SAUDIS WOULD BE I TOUCH WITH JORDANIANS AND THAT SEVERAL ARREARAGES ON PAST COMMITMENTS TO JORDAN WOULD BE PAID ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. THAT TOO MAY BE SOME SOORT OF A SIGNAL. RIFAI HOWEVER SEEMS SUPREMELY CONFIDENTLY AT THIS POINT ABOUT THE WAY THE DEAL HAS WORKED OUT HAD THE WHOLE THING FALLEN THROUGH WE ASSUME HE WOULD HAVE BEEN AND STILL MIGHT WELL BE IF IT DOS FAL THROUGH KING PRIME SCAPEGOAT IN THE AFFAIR.
END COMMENT.
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